

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – EVALUATING RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

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Focuses on Beeman's article, "Evaluating Violence Against Women Research Reports" from a national resource center on domestic violence.

So what do we use research on violence against women for? Well, this research can provide individuals and organizations working to end violence against women with key information that helps improve services to battered women and their families. It can also be used for the development of programs based on sound research knowledge and public policies that support battered women and their families.

It also contributes to an individual being a knowledgeable, critical consumer of research, and this is, in fact, key. So what does it mean to be considered a knowledgeable critical consumer of research? Well, being a knowledgeable critical consumer of research is important, because one needs to know where to go to find credible research like professional journals, such as *Violence Against Women*, the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *Violence and Victims*, and the *Journal of Family Violence*.

All these journals include research conducted by criminologists, psychologists, social workers, sociologists, advocates, as well as other academics interested in studying violence against women. Part of being a knowledgeable and critical consumer of research indicates that these individuals also need to know what to read and where to find it. Not all research is created equal either in terms of its scientific quality or its practical value.

The informed consumer of research should pay attention to the professional background and ideological perspective of the researcher and the funder or sponsor of the research in order to help determine the credibility of the findings. A knowledgeable and critical consumer of research also needs to understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative research, specifically quantitative research usually seeks to generalize findings beyond the study at hand, whereas qualitative research usually seeks to understand a particular sample of individuals, or it is used to generate new theories.

Ultimately, the five basic questions that guide critical analysis of research are the following. What is the study about? Regarding this question, the statement of purpose should provide enough information to help us determine if we are interested in reading the entire study. Related question-- how does the study fit into what is already known? In this regard, the literature review should help us determine the relevance of the study in order to determine whether it provides new knowledge and how it contributes to what we know or don't know about a particular topic.

Third question-- how was the study conducted? In this sense, who were the sample participants, and how were they selected for this study? How are these sample participants the same or different than individuals served in domestic violence programs, for instance? How are the key study

concepts defined? Do they fit with certain domestic violence programs' definition of those concepts? Does the study design fit the purpose of the study? Do the data collection methods used allow the researcher to answer their research questions? Were appropriate data analyses procedures used?

Finally, the fourth question-- what was found? Were the research questions answered with the data? If inferential statistics were used, were the findings significant? Does the qualitative data provide credible answers to the research questions? So the so what question-- what does it mean? In this section, the researchers make sense of their findings and present their interpretation of the results.

Then you have to ask the question, are the conclusions grounded in the data that they presented? Are limitations of the study discussed? And finally, do the findings have practical application or implication? This concludes the presentation.